



Eddie A. Pérez
Alcalde

MAYOR PEREZ SAYS “LET’S GROW HARTFORD!”

INVESTMENT/MOMENTUM KEY THEMES TO STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

---NEWS RELEASE---

(March 10, 2008)--- Mayor Eddie A. Perez wants to build on Hartford’s success of the past six years and has asked City Council, residents and business leaders to work with him to **“Grow Hartford!”**

After emphasizing a long list of achievements, including **reducing crime to a historic low**; offering **more educational options to Hartford parents and students**; **creating jobs**, and **welcoming 112 new and expanding businesses** to the City last year alone--- **Mayor Perez says, “Hartford is a great investment. We have come too far, to turn back now.”**

Plans to increase public safety include:

1. **The Fugitive Task Force** to track and apprehend “Hartford’s Most Wanted”
2. The City working with State and Federal Authorities to **maximize the prosecution of those arrested for gun violence**
3. The Mayor calling on the State to **add more parole and probation officers** for persons re-entering our neighborhoods
4. The HPD already planning its **“Safe Summer Initiative”**
5. The Mayor requesting **30 additional officers** in the budget.

Mayor Perez says, “Safety is priceless and so are Hartford’s children.” When it comes to education, new schools are under construction, the new dress code is expanding, new school models are opening this fall, and there’s a new teacher contract that rewards teachers when students achieve their academic goals.

Mayor Perez says, **“We are offering more options than ever for parents and students.** With “choice” comes change, more engagement and more involvement that will lead to the positive change we all want. We are not only building schools, we are creating better ones.”

Some of the changes include Hartford Public High School becoming home to four academies:

1. **The 9th Grade Academy**
2. **The Engineering and Green Technology Academy**

3. **The Law and Government Academy**
4. **And the Nursing Academy**

Change is not just reserved to academics. **Hartford is also changing the way education is funded--- so that the money follows the student** not the school or the adult. The Mayor says, “This is a direct investment in the child. The pay-off will be a more competitive workforce. But these future workers are going to need jobs. That’s why the city is working diligently to attract businesses to create good jobs with good wages and good healthcare.”

Connecting the City’s progress by reducing blight is also crucial. The first installment of the Hartford Neighborhood Development Fund will focus on:

1. **“The Constitutional Curve” that starts at Downtown’s empty Clarion Hotel, heads north across I-84, and hooks over to Myrtle Street in Asylum Hill**
2. **Barbour Street, in the City’s Northeast neighborhood from Capen to Westland**
3. **Frog Hollow --- from Capitol Avenue to Park Terrace, down Park Street and over to Broad Street**
4. **And Lower Franklin Avenue in the South End, just south of Hartford Hospital.**

This money will be utilized to build on Hartford’s goal to increase homeownership. Despite the trouble of the nation’s housing market, **Hartford has created almost 3,000 new units of housing throughout the city with 1500, or half of them, being new homeowners.**

The foreclosure rate in Hartford is far below cities like New Haven and Bridgeport but Mayor Perez believes that we must fight to help hardworking families keep their homes. **The City is working with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston on a new program called the Mortgage Relief Fund to help those refinance subprime loans.**

Young people also need a leg-up on the housing market. **Hartford is focusing on a new concept: “Worker Housing.”** This will help maintain and grow Connecticut’s workforce, especially in the financial and insurance sectors. These moderate-income housing units adjacent to major employers would be available to entry-level employees, particularly those immediately out of college. **Mayor Perez has requested \$2 million in Federal aid** to be used to help secure rights to properties that can be revitalized.

Mayor Perez says, “In order to stay with the plan, we must pass a city budget that can support these initiatives. I want to remind Hartford that we have had **three straight years of budget surpluses.** All along, we’ve **maintained a strong bond rating, invested in critical infrastructure like roads, schools, and libraries, and our pensions are funded at over 100%.** To continue this sound financial policy, we’ve already instituted a number of actions including growing the grand list, trimming the workforce, and increasing energy saving efforts.”

The Mayor goes on to say, “With the help of Council, we have kept the budget growth low for six years but in order to make it seven, as requested by Council, **we have asked the Legislature to fully fund Payments in Lieu of Taxes, or PILOT,** and I would like to thank the Hartford Delegation for supporting this effort.”

If this funding happens, there will be no need to raise taxes in Hartford. If the state doesn’t, then Hartford leaders will have to act quickly and that includes asking taxpayers to make the sacrifice to keep the momentum going.

Mayor Perez says, “Let me be clear, the state needs to meet its obligation. I ask the Governor and the General Assembly to set aside their differences and work together to achieve real property tax reform.”

He adds, **“No one wants to stop, slow, or lose the progress we’ve made.** Last year, we attracted 275,000 new visitors to the city. We’re doing the right thing, but we must do more. We must think big and we must think smart. We must continue to get the good word out about Hartford. As the commercial said, **‘Come see for yourself.’** Now let’s add, **‘Let’s Grow Hartford!’**”